

Exhibit D

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing on behalf of my brother Gary/ Alexis, who has found himself in the most difficult situation I could imagine. I'd like to start by explaining our relationship. Gary is actually my cousin, but he was raised as my brother. I have known him and lived with him as a member of my family, my entire life. When I was younger, I hadn't yet understood the family ties and always referred to him as my brother. I continue to do this now, 20 years later. There isn't enough time or paper to write just how big a role he plays in my life, but I will try my best to summarize.

In my pre-pubescent years, Gary and I had the average brother-sister relationship: I loved to play with his belongings and he pretended I was a nuisance. When my parents first became estranged, I was too young to notice the changes. I did, however, notice that my relationship with Gary changed. We grew closer and he distracted me from our situation. When my parents finally divorced, he subtly took over as my second in-home parent alongside my mother. He was my source for information about school, sports, and eventually boys. He became more than a brother for me at just the right moment and I know that without him, I would have grown to be a completely different woman.

This isn't to say our relationship was always serious and boring. Gary managed to fill the father role and the brother role gracefully. In his love for the game of basketball he had been bothering me for years about trying the sport. When I quit dancing, I decided to give it a try, and he went above and beyond to help me. He started training me immediately and helped me join my middle school's basketball team. My coach noticed how quickly I was progressing and suggested that I play AAU. I had never heard of the league, but when I told Gary about it his face lit up. He proceeded to search AAU teams in the area and called coaches to get me the chance to try out. Because of him, I played AAU for two years and got good enough to play on varsity as a freshman in high-school. I played other sports as well as basketball, and even though they weren't in his interests, Gary always managed to show up at my games and meets to support me.

Sadly, my athletic career ended after an injury my junior year. I was distraught and I knew that Gary was too, but somehow he managed to cheer me up and keep me optimistic all throughout my 8 months of recovery. He would point out all that I had going for me and keep me motivated to get through the experience, and I did. I owe him for helping me see that, not playing sports competitively did not mean the end of my goals. He reminded me that although sports could have helped me reach it, my true goal was to become a doctor. A year later, I graduated Summa Cum Laude and went on to start college at Boston University. As adults, we have argued and discussed pretty much anything that came to mind. From race to gender roles to politics to sports to health. We could tell each other anything and everything. I could finish his thoughts and just about read his mind. He was more than my brother, more than a father, he was my best friend. In college, he provided me the same support even while in prison dealing with his own problems and pending decisions on his life.

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I have so many unique experiences like these that shaped who I am today and demonstrate who Gary is as a person. We have grown up in the same environment, but two very important factors have defined our successes. Gary has goals to graduate from college and complete a physical therapy degree because, like me, he wants to help people. What separates us is our birthplace and our legal parents. While I was born here in the US, and grew up with my legal parents, Gary was born in Haiti and grew up without his parents. Although his dad was and still is present in his life, the relationship was different than the one I had with my parents. I truly believe that our experiences and the opportunities available to us determine our success rate and I believe that if he was dealt a different hand, Gary might not have ended up in prison praying not to be deported to a country with a death sentence.

I'm not using the phrase death sentence to be facetious or to give dramatic effect. Gary is more American than I am and frankly I would have a better chance at survival. Gary came here as a toddler and has never been back. I have been going to Haiti every few years (before the earthquake) since birth. I speak the language fluently and he barely knows enough Creole words to form a full sentence. He has only heard about the dangers of living in Haiti presently whereas I have witnessed them during my travels there recently in an adoption quest with my mom. With all the uprisings and murders happening, I wouldn't even think about stepping foot in this country again that I have been comfortable visiting my whole life. For someone like Gary who would essentially be a tourist, it is especially dangerous because foreigners are a greater target.

I would, however, like to clarify that I am not looking to make excuses for Gary. I understand that he made a few mistakes and that this experience was necessary to get him back on the right track. I know that being in prison has exposed him to where his life could be headed and I know that that path is not what he wants to follow. I have prayed for him every night, asking God to give him and my family the strength to get through this. I am praying that whoever decides his fate next has his best interests at heart. I am praying that at the end of his sentence, he will continue to be the funny, caring man I know him to be. I am praying that he is given a second chance to accomplish his goals and prove that he won't be another stereotype, another young black man with potential and nothing to show for it.

Sincerely,

Joanne Pierre-Louis


Boston University, Class of 2018

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